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ABSTRACT

In 1999, Rhode Island students in grades 3, 7, and 10 took a performance assessment in writing as part of the Rhode Island State Assessment Program. These two documents, a guide for educators and a guide for parents, describe the test and its scoring. The test is called a performance assessment because it requires the students to demonstrate their ability to write an essay in response to a suggested topic. As such, it is a test of writing skills in standard English. The "Guide to Interpretation" contains information for educators in the following chapters: (1) "Background"; (2) "Purpose"; (3) "The Writing Tests"; (4) "Scoring Process"; (5) "Use of Test Results"; (6) "Elements of an Effective Writing Classroom"; and (7) "Summary." Five appendixes contain writing samples, a sample performance report, a writing process diagram, a description of the scoring teams, and a list of annotated resources. The "Interpretation Guide for Families, Grades 3, 7, and 10" explains the performance assessment to parents and contains writing samples for the three grades. (SLD)

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STATE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

1999

Writing Assessment

Guide to Interpretation

3

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Writing Assessment Guide to Interpretation
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BACKGROUND

In 1986–87, the Rhode Island Department of Education expanded its assessment of language skills to include examining students' ability to write at grade three. In 1989, the Department expanded the writing assessment to include the writing of sixth-grade students. Since that time, the assessment has evolved into testing at grades three, seven, and ten in three different genres. The assessment is aimed at measuring a student's ability to communicate effectively through writing in a way that models a process approach to writing. Research on the acquisition of writing indicates that the most effective classroom experiences are those that encourage and promote writing as a dynamic series of actions on the part of the writer.

The 1998–99 Rhode Island Writing Assessment was a collaborative effort of the Rhode Island Department of Education, Advanced Systems in Measurement and Evaluation, Inc. (Advanced Systems), and the Rhode Island Writing Project. Moreover, teachers and school administrators from nearly every district in the state participated in the scoring process at grades three, seven, and ten. Through this collaborative effort, the Department of Education hopes that the writing assessment will continue to be a catalyst to developing writing curricula in the schools.

PURPOSE

With increased attention on writing, educators have focused on the nature of writing processes and, in particular, on the wide variety of higher-order skills from which writers draw in any act of writing. These higher-order skills include planning, thinking, categorizing, choosing, organizing, and using language to deliver an intended message.

The program in Rhode Island has its roots in performance-based assessment that attempts to match teaching and testing practices as closely as possible. Performance-based assessment measures student progress using criteria based upon classroom practices. These writing assessments usually involve the collection of writing completed under controlled circumstances. Although a single writing sample can only approximate what happens in reality, the evaluation of that sample can provide an indication of the fluency of a student's writing. Moreover, a large-scale writing assessment can help evaluate curriculum and promote effective writing instruction at the classroom level.

Building on these assumptions, the Rhode Island Department of Education has chosen a "process model" for its writing assessment. This interpretation guide, intended to help link evaluation and classroom instruction, uses samples from the Spring 1999 writing assessments.

This booklet provides an overview of the test and an explanation of the holistic scoring process that was used to assess the third-, seventh-, and tenth-grade writing samples. It provides a practical basis for interpreting Rhode Island students' writing scores. Besides providing teachers and administrators with descriptions of the assessment process, this book seeks to introduce some instructional aids, such as the diagram of writing as a process (Appendix C), and a review of teaching resources (Appendix E).

OVERVIEW

The evaluation plan used for the Rhode Island third-, seventh-, and tenth-grade Writing Assessments was based on research in the teaching of writing, a strong belief in teacher involvement, and a commitment to a direct link between assessment and instruction. Specific factors that guided the development of the assessment include:

- the selection of an evaluation model that reflects a process approach to writing;
- the development of the writing exercise with the advice of knowledgeable teachers and test developers;
- the establishment of a cadre of trained educators skilled in scoring essays—who can serve as resource persons in each district to strengthen the use and understanding of the writing assessment; and
- the establishment of valid scoring procedures that address the integration of many skills that the writer may use to respond to a particular topic or situation—including such elements as ideas, organization, tone, audience awareness, transitions, sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation.

TEST DEVELOPMENT

Since 1987, Rhode Island writing committees have met regularly with assessment consultants to plan and design writing prompts. Field testing and subsequent evaluation of the results enables the writing committees to select prompts that require comparable levels of writing skills and to which all students have access. Prompts are selected with the following questions in mind:

- Is the prompt comparable to others that were field-tested?
- Is the assigned task clearly explained?
- How appropriate is it to the students' grade level?
- Does the prompt ask for skills specific to a particular genre of writing, such as narrative, informative/expository, or persuasive?
- Can the responses be scored easily with the scoring criteria?
- Does the topic allow for students to perform as positively as possible?

The following 1999 prompts were selected after having been field-tested and validated in a number of schools:

- **Grade Three Writing Prompt:** Imagine that one day you found a strange rock in the schoolyard. You could turn this rock into anyone or anything. What does it turn into? Write a story about what happens when it changes.
- **Grade Seven Writing Prompt:** Think about a special day or event you shared with someone. It might be a short trip or a party. Describe what you did and why it was important.
- **Grade Ten Writing Prompt:** Your school's administrative team plans to establish a new dress code. If the plan is accepted, uniforms will replace regular school attire. Students and faculty alike will be affected by this plan. Decide whether you **agree** or **disagree** with this plan. Write a letter to your school's administrative team supporting or opposing the planned dress code. Support your opinion with specific examples or reasons. Begin your letter, Dear Administrative Team.

TEST DEVELOPMENT (Continued)

The prompt chosen for grade three asks students to respond in a narrative mode of writing. This mode has been used since the writing assessment started at grade three. At grade seven, students were asked to respond to an informative/expository style, and at grade ten in a persuasive mode. The decision to require students to respond in three different genres of writing at the three different grade levels was made to align the assessment with the expected standards in English Language Arts framework.

TEST ADMINISTRATION

The writing assessment involves a writing assignment administered over two consecutive days. The writing assignment gives students some guidance in prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing to model a process approach to writing. On the first day of the testing, the students receive a handout providing a writing prompt and prewriting suggestions; the teacher reads directions aloud while the students follow along. Students write first drafts on standard school paper with a total of 45 minutes allocated for directions, prewriting, generating, and drafting. Forty minutes of this time is for actual writing.

On the second day, the students answer a series of revision questions designed to help them reread and revise their first drafts. A total of 45 minutes is allocated for the second day, just as for the first day. The teachers read revision directions and ask students to consider several questions about their writing, such as:

1. Did you give a good description of . . . ? (specific to prompt)
2. Did you explain clearly . . . ? (specific to prompt)
3. How can you make the writing more interesting?
4. What changes do you think will improve your original draft?

Finally, the students use a short checklist of editing questions about punctuation, spelling, and mechanics to make final corrections. Their final compositions, not the drafts or the composing process, are scored.

OVERVIEW

One of the most productive and valid means of assessing writing as written communication is holistic scoring. Holistic scoring assumes that writing should be measured as a whole piece and that error counts do not accurately reflect competency levels.

On April 7, 8, 14, 15, 28, and 29, 1999, teams of scorers (see Appendix B), selected from recommendations made by Rhode Island public school superintendents, met to score the third-, seventh-, and tenth-grade writing samples. The chief readers were responsible for training scorers in holistic scoring methods, monitoring discussions, and answering questions, while consultants from Advanced Systems provided technical and logistical support. Teachers and administrators who had served on the writing committee acted as table leaders and were assigned a group of readers. The table leaders facilitated the training in holistic scoring by leading discussions of the criteria and the sample papers at their tables, and by monitoring the scoring. Essays were given two readings and, on each reading, scored on a scale of 1 to 6. Scores and a reader identification number were recorded on a score sheet designed by Advanced Systems. If a reader was found to have a large number of essays at variance with a second reader, she or he could be easily identified and further trained.

For score reliability, "discrepant" scores were read a third time. Discrepant scores are those having a difference of more than 1. For example, one reader may score an essay at a 5 while the second reader may score the same essay at a 3. Such scores were resolved by the chief readers who read the essay for a third time.

The writing prompts permitted a broad range of responses and approaches to the question from the students. However, there was a score of NR (No Response) for responses that were blank or contained just one or two words. In these cases, a student did sit for the test, but did not respond or wrote only one or two words. Another score, OT, indicated papers that were completely Off Topic. It was only in cases where the response was clearly not related to the writing prompts, and after two chief readers reviewed the writing, that a piece of writing was assigned a score of OT.

Crisis responses are those written by students that require further attention at the school district level. Such responses usually focus on a personal problem the student may be facing. Copies of crisis papers were sent to school principals with a letter recommending that action be taken.

Scores reported to districts, teachers, and students reflect the fact that two readers scored each essay. The scores were combined so that a paper that received two scores of 4 would be given a final score of 8; a paper that received a 5 and a 6 would receive a final score of 11; and so on. Thus the scores reported appear to be scored on a scale of 2 to 12.

SCORING CRITERIA

The criteria selected for use in the scoring of the Rhode Island Writing Assessment were developed by the writing committees in consultation with the Educational Testing Service Examiners and the Rhode Island Writing Project. Initially, the committees were unsure how complex the writing would be and felt a 4-point scale would be appropriate. However, it became clear that student writing was becoming increasingly complex. Additionally, standards in writing were set at higher levels. The 4-point scale was not able to identify outstanding writing adequately, nor did it provide enough categories to clearly distinguish between those students whose writing was in the middle range.

SCORING CRITERIA (Continued)

As a consequence, the writing committees developed a 6-point scale, which was used for the first time in 1991. Criteria are not grade-specific; the qualities described represent the qualities of good writing at any level.

When a piece of writing is read by a scorer, that scorer does not evaluate discrete or separate elements. In a few moments, the reader responds to what the whole piece communicates. If the whole is unintelligible or barely readable, the reader does not receive the full message in the most effective way. On the other hand, a piece with some surface grammatical errors can communicate so effectively through ideas, descriptive language, and originality that the reader barely notices the errors. In holistic scoring, the scores do not necessarily penalize students for grammatical errors, but rather for weaknesses that obscure the meaning and general impressions of the essay. It should be remembered that the reported scores in the writing assessment reflect a performance level described by the criteria.

SCORING CRITERIA: RHODE ISLAND WRITING ASSESSMENT

SCORE	CRITERIA
6	Presents thoughtful ideas and develops them logically, fully, and clearly; is very well-organized from beginning to end; has a strong command of sentence structure; uses language effectively; has few intrusive errors in grammar and conventions (spelling, punctuation, and capitalization). A "6" essay may be distinguished by features such as making insightful observations, using rich details, or creating an effective scene or mood.
5	Presents good ideas and develops them logically, fully, and clearly; is very well-organized throughout; has a generally strong command of sentence structure; uses language well; has relatively few intrusive errors in grammar and conventions.
4	Presents relevant ideas and develops them clearly and fairly well; is generally well-organized throughout; has generally well-formed sentences; uses language fairly well; has relatively few serious, intrusive errors in grammar and conventions.
3	Presents some relevant ideas fairly clearly and gives some support; shows some sense of organization; has generally correct sentence structure; uses language adequately; may contain some serious errors in grammar and conventions.
2	Gives some relevant ideas, but they are unclear or barely developed; shows little sense of organization; lacks sentence control; uses language poorly; probably contains serious errors in grammar and conventions.
1	Probably contains serious and persistent errors; is incoherent or underdeveloped.

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REPORTING OF SCORES

Writing assessment results are provided in the following formats:

- Individual Student Performance Report
- Class Roster
- School Roster
- Summary Reports (by class, school, and district)
- Participation Report

Students receive a single writing score, ranging from 2 to 12, that represents the combined scores of two readers. Parents are informed of this in a brochure that accompanies the student's performance report. The brochure also provides details of the assessment, the scoring criteria, and a sample student response that meets the standard. Teachers receive individual student scores on the Class Roster and also on the School Roster.

The Summary Reports, by class, school, and district, present the percentage of students in the class, school, and district who achieved or exceeded the standard. These percentages represent the number of students tested, except for those who received a No Response (NR) score for one of the following reasons: Extended Absence, IEP Directive, or ESL Beginning Level. This year we are implementing a new reporting format for the Writing Assessment (Appendix D). As indicated in the report, we will now be reporting in five performance categories instead of four as in previous years. For the purposes of this assessment, scores of 8, 9, or 10 indicate a student has "Achieved the Standard," while last year's reports indicated the same scores of 8, 9, or 10 as being "Proficient." Score points of 11 or 12 indicate "Achieved the Standard with Honors" while all the other possible score points are contained within the remaining three categories of "Nearly Achieved the Standard," "Below the Standard," and "Little Evidence of Achievement."

Setting the standard that is expected for ALL students at a score point of 8 presents an ambitious and challenging target that is central to the core of the Rhode Island Comprehensive Education Strategy and Article 31.

When individual scores are interpreted, both the teacher and parent should be aware that this score is a single indicator of a student's writing ability and should be used in combination with other information about a student's writing achievement. It should also be noted that a different mode (or style) of writing was tested at each grade level; at grade 3, narrative; at grade 7, information/expository; and at grade 10, persuasive. Since the writing assessment is subject to limitations, it may be best viewed as a good, objective starting point in identifying a student's writing ability.

OVERVIEW

The writing assessment is one of many steps in a comprehensive writing program. As one of such steps, the assessment's resulting scores can be used to strengthen and inform a writing program. The Rhode Island Writing Assessment reflects a model of writing as a process of interrelated and recursive mental action (see diagram, Appendix C). Like thinking, writing happens quickly, on several different planes, with additions, changes, and revisions. When asked, "What is difficult about writing?," many adult and student writers point out that their minds usually move more quickly than their hands can type or write, and that a wide gap exists between thought and concrete expression on paper. Hence, most writers learn by trial and error that writing is best done in a series of interrelated stages of listing, planning, note taking or sketching, and talking—all activities that writing researchers refer to using the broad term **rehearsing**.

Prewriting is another term writing researchers use, but such a term may be misleading since it implies activities that occur prior to the act of writing. In fact, we know that many experienced writers write before and during the rehearsal stage.

It is difficult to define writing process because the term describes processes of thought and communication that, like human beings, come in many varieties. The writing process includes a wide variety of intellectual activities such as planning, drafting, rereading, rewriting, and editing. Selected resources on writing process and its use in classroom instruction are provided in Appendix E.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR A WRITING CURRICULUM

The importance of written communication is reflected in the continuous emphasis that writing has received for many years. Most recently, the content standards contained in the English Language Arts framework specifically address the writing process. Research into the methods and strategies of effective, experienced writers has demonstrated that effective writers learn, usually by a trial-and-error approach, that writing is a process of recursive activities involving reading, rereading, writing, and rewriting. Recursive simply means turning back on itself. This is precisely what an effective writer's process does, in that the writer moves back and forth between sentences and paragraphs, and between the meaning of ideas and the expressions of those ideas.

As a result of continued research in classrooms and schools in Great Britain, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States, researchers have suggested the elements of an effective writing classroom. The following considerations are presented for your continued reflection on how best to support and encourage students' writing processes.

ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE WRITING CLASSROOM

1. In establishing goals for writing curricula, teachers must consider an environment that supports and encourages writing. Donald Graves, a nationally recognized writing expert, suggests that students need to write regularly—at least three hours a week. The classroom environment should include a predictable writing schedule so that students can expect to write.

2. In effective writing programs, teachers make clear to their students what is expected of them. Students are carefully taught to take responsibility for writing folders, editing checklists, and other responsibilities of the writer. Teachers encourage students to choose their own topics for writing. As Donald Graves suggests, effective writing teachers know that the students own their writing. In such a classroom, the teacher becomes a facilitator for the students' learning.

3. Writing teachers should consistently write and share their writing and revision processes with their students. Teachers, in this way, model writing behaviors. Effective teachers from kindergarten through college personally experience what they are asking of their students.

4. Teachers should confer and talk with their students about their writing in a way that models the behavior and questions they hope will occur when students talk with each other about their writing. They should also listen to their students discuss their writing since much can be learned about a writer that way. Teachers' conference questions should be open-ended; Mary Ellen Giacobbe starts off conferences with first graders by saying "Tell me about your writing (or drawing)" (Giacobbe, 1988).

5. Effective writing teachers evaluate growth over time, basing their judgments on the work accumulating in the student's writing folder. These teachers establish clear criteria for evaluation (for writing in general and for individual assignments). They also explore and explain areas of success, progress, and concern in conference with each writer.

6. Effective teachers document their students' progress, not with a single number or letter, but by keeping track of what happens in conference: what revisions are made, what skills are used correctly, what skills students need to emphasize. Such teachers maintain permanent folders of their students' writing, having students date, collect, and file all their drafts.

7. Effective writing teachers know that much of the satisfaction of writing comes with sharing that writing with a real "audience," and in having members of that audience respond to a finished piece of writing. Such teachers provide student writers with options for sharing their writing in such places as "published" books or classroom or school magazines, with classmates during sharing times, or in school newspapers or on bulletin boards.

8. Effective writing teachers realize that writers need a variety of utensils, materials, and equipment and they provide as large an assortment as possible: different kinds, sizes, and colors of paper; lined and unlined ditto masters; staplers, glue, tape, and erasers. Date stamps help younger students date their drafts with ease; rubber stamps that say "DRAFT" or "WORK IN PROGRESS" act as signals that allow students freedom for revision without worrying about errors until they approach the final draft.

ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE WRITING CLASSROOM (Continued)

9. Effective teachers who have other subjects besides language to teach often integrate writing as a means of learning and thinking in all content areas.

10. Effective writing teachers do not use a "canned" program. Rather, they see each student and each classroom writing community as individual and dynamic. Such teachers watch how their students acquire language and writing, and through such observations, make their writing program meaningful for their students.

SUMMARY

The Rhode Island Writing Assessment has for its goal the increased and improved instruction of writing in Rhode Island schools. This writing test attempts to support a holistic approach to writing as process. It also attempts to teach writing as a process of generating ideas, organizing those ideas, rereading, rearranging, and rewriting, and finally editing and polishing.

One of the most productive elements of the writing assessment has been the inclusion of classroom teachers in planning, development, and scoring of the test. Thus, the test has three interconnected goals: 1) to assess the actual writing of students in Rhode Island by evaluating samples holistically; 2) to encourage and support the development of curricula based upon the state framework, which reflects a process approach to writing; and, 3) to provide teachers with a most valuable form of in-service training, that of examining and discussing the criteria for effective writing and scoring large numbers of actual student essays according to those criteria.

APPENDIX A: 1999 GRADES THREE, SEVEN, AND TEN WRITING SAMPLES

The following writing samples were collected during the 1999 administration of the Rhode Island Writing Assessment and selected as anchor papers. Anchor papers help to define the criteria. Although the sample papers are typical examples of the scores they represent, the samples in each scoring category for each grade level of 3, 7, and 10 are not always of identical quality. In other words, each category of the 6-point scale will display a range of ability across that particular score. Therefore, a paper can be described as a "high 6" or a "low 6," yet both scores indicate an essay clearly superior in comparison to the total test population. This concept is true across all scoring levels.

The writing samples that follow appear exactly as the students wrote them—no corrections have been made. Anonymity has been preserved for the writer, school, and district. Each essay is preceded by a typed version for easier reading, and underneath the typed transcription is a brief analysis that explains how the criteria apply to the score.

GRADE THREE SAMPLE ESSAY: SCORE OF 6

CRITERIA:

Presents thoughtful ideas and develops them logically, fully, and clearly; is very well-organized from beginning to end; has a strong command of sentence structure; uses language effectively; has few intrusive errors in grammar and conventions (spelling, punctuation, and capitalization). A "6" essay may be distinguished by features such as making insightful observations, using rich details, or creating an effective scene or mood.

ESSAY:

Squishy

Riinng!!! The recess bell finally rang. Students swarmed out of classrooms and out onto the playground. I ran outside, happy to finally have some fresh air. I walked around the playground when suddenly, I saw a strange rock on the ground. It shimmered in the light of the sun. I picked it up. It was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen! The rock was pure white, truly magnificent. I squeezed it in the palm of my hand. For some strange reason, it felt sort of squishy. I tried molding it into things. I molded it into a dog, a girl, and a horse. Everything I molded looked so realistic. "I know," I said "I want to give you a name. I'll name you Squishy,because you are so squishy.

That was how it came to be that Squishy became my pet. One day, when I was at my house, I started to think about dogs. Then suddenly, a ridiculous idea came into my head. I could turn Squishy into a dog. It would never happen, but I could try. I molded Squishy into a dog and said "Abra, cadabra, please turn into a dog." Suddenly, to my amazement, he turned into a dog! Plus, he was a talking dog. Pretty soon, everyone knew about Squishy, the talking dog. We became famous. But when we had free time, we would go to the park and play. I loved Squishy. I knew he also loved me in return. But one day he told me something sad. He had to change back to a rock. He could not stay a dog forever. I was heartbroken, but I knew it was the best thing to do. So that afternoon, I changed him back to a rock and brought him to the schoolyard where his real home was. Slowly, very slowly I put him back on the ground. I was sad, but I knew he was a friend I would never forget.

The End

ANALYSIS:

This paper is an example of student writing at the "6" level. The writer creates a well-organized story with a clear beginning, middle, and end. The scene for discovery of the rock is set; then, through interesting and fully developed details, the writer explains how the rock was used. From the opening "Riinng!!!" and "Students swarmed out of classrooms..." to "Slowly, very slowly I put him back on the ground," the use of language enhances the story line. Sentence structure is varied and controlled, including correct punctuation of dialogue. This writer thoughtfully creates a device—"He could not stay a dog forever"—that leads to an effective closure for the story.

ESSAY:

Squishy

Riinng!!! The recess bell finally rang. Students swarmed out of classrooms and out onto the playground. I ran outside, happy to finally have some fresh air. I walked around the playground when suddenly, I saw a strange rock on the ground. It shimmered in the light of the sun. I picked it up. It was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen! The rock was pure white, truly magnificent. I squeezed it in the palm of my hand. For some strange reason, it felt sort of squishy. I tried molding it into things. I molded it into a dog, a girl, and a horse. Everything I molded looked so realistic. "I know," I said. "I want to give you a name. I'll name you Squishy, because you are so squishy. That was how it came to be that Squishy became my pet. One day, when I was at my house, I started to think about dogs. Then suddenly, a ridiculous

ESSAY CONTINUED:

idea came into my head. I could turn Squishy into a dog. It would never happen, but I could try. I molded Squishy into a dog and said "Abra, cadabra, please turn into a dog." Suddenly, to my amazement, he turned into a dog! Plus, he was a talking dog. Pretty soon, everyone knew about Squishy, the talking dog. We became famous. But when we had free time, we would go to the park and play. I loved Squishy. I knew he also loved me in return. But one day he told me something sad. He had to change back to a rock. He could not stay a dog forever. I was heartbroken, but I knew it was the best thing to do. So that afternoon, I changed him back to a rock and brought him to the schoolyard where his real home was. Slowly, very slowly I put him back on the ground. I was sad, but I knew he was a friend I would never forget.

The End

GRADE THREE SAMPLE ESSAY: SCORE OF 5

CRITERIA:

Presents good ideas and develops them logically, fully, and clearly; is very well-organized throughout; has a generally strong command of sentence structure; uses language well; has relatively few intrusive errors in grammar and conventions.

ESSAY:

The Rock

It was a sunny day at Elementary School. The air was fresh and the birds were singing. "Resses" called the teacher. Alice was not a very popular girl in school and she did not have any friends. Alice was lonley sometimes.Alice was looking for adventur and something to share with a friend. Something told her she would find her adventur on the school grounds. Alice walked passed the hopscotch, swings and the slide. She finally came to a coner near three large bushes. She sat down and rested her head against the bushes. Alice picked up a rock and through it high into the air and cought it. She held the rock tightly and said "I wish I had a friend" The small rock started to shack but nothing happend. When resses was over Alice carried the rock to her classroom. She put it in her bag. When there was 10 minutes left in the school day Alice's teacher toke Alice and her classmates outside. Alice got her tiny rock out of her bag and tolk it outside. The rock started to get bigger and bigger. The tiny rock was know longer tiny. The rock grew arms, Legs, head, hair and shiny red lips. "Hello" it said in a shakey little voice "Oh my" said Alice. Alice talked to the creature. "My name is Vici" It said for the hole 10 minutes they laughed and gigled toegether days pased, weeks pased, years pased. When the girls were both 18 Vici and Alice decided to go to those three bushes. And they did. They laughed and they gigled and they gigled and they laughed all over again. Alice and Vici were best friends and Alice had found that something that something to share the adventur of Friend ship! THE END!

ANALYSIS:

This paper is an example of student writing at the "5" level. There is a fully developed story with a logical plot line that is consistently well organized. The writer's use of language helps to create the scene and mood: "The air was fresh and the birds were singing," "They laughed and they gigled and they gigled and they laughed all over again." Sentence structure is mostly correct and the use of dialogue enhances the story. There are some spelling and punctuation errors that are not intrusive. An effective organizational device at the end brings the characters back to the location of the beginning of the story and provides a fitting conclusion.

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ESSAY:

The Rock

It was a sunny day at Elementry School. The air was fresh and the birds were singing. "Resses" called the teacher. Alice was not a very popular girl in school and she did not hare any friends. Alice was lonley sometimes. Alice was looking for adventur and something to share with a friend. Something told her she would find her adventur on the school grounds Alice walked passed the hopscotch, swings and the slide. She finally came to a coner near three large bushes. She sat down and rested her head against the bushes. Alice picked up a rock and through it high into the air and cought it. She held the rock tightly and said "I wish

ESSAY CONTINUED:

I had a friend" The small rock started to shack but nothing happend. When resses was over Alice carried the rock to her classroom. She put it in her bag When there was 10 minutes left in the school day Alice's teacher take Alice and her classmates outside. Alice got her tiny rock out of her bag and tolk it outside. The rock started to get bigger and bigger. The tiny rock was know longer tiny. The rock grew arms, Legs, heads hair and shiny red lips. "Hello" it said in a shakey little voice "Oh my" said Alice. Alice talked to the creature. "My name is Vici" It said for the hole 10 minutes they laughed and gided toegether days pased, weeks pased, years pased. When the girls were both 18

ESSAY CONTINUED:

Vici and Alice decided to go to those three bushes. And they did. They laughed and they gigled and they gigled and they laughed all orer again. Alice and Vici were best friends and Alice had found that something that something to share the adventur of Friend ship! THE END!

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GRADE THREE SAMPLE ESSAY: SCORE OF 4

CRITERIA:

Presents relevant ideas and develops them clearly and fairly well; is generally well-organized throughout; has generally well-formed sentences; uses language fairly well; has relatively few serious, intrusive errors in grammar and conventions.

ESSAY:

One day I was walking through the school yard and I found this neat looking rock. Magical spots on this rock were moving around and spelling out words it read you may wish for any thing you would like with this rock but remember you only get one wish. I heild the stone tightly I wish I said I wish I wish I had a pet elephant! I heard foot steps that sounded like giants be hind me. I slowly turned around and saw a humungous! gigantic! enormous! elephant stamping through the grass! It picked me up by its trunk and started charging straight tourd the school! I closed my eyes and imagined this wasn't happening but believe me that did not work. when I opened my eyes We were standing right above my class one by one they fanted and fell like dominoes. The elephant and I tramped through the school distroying every little piece of it. I rode the elephant home from school but when I got their my mom would not let me have the elephant. Well at least I wouldn't have to go to school well, not for a while.

ANALYSIS:

This paper is an example of a third grader's writing that meets Rhode Island's writing standard. This appropriate response to the prompt contains relevant ideas that are developed fairly well: It is clear what happens when the rock changes. The organization of ideas allows the reader to follow the story with ease. The writer's use of language helps create emotion—"I wish I said I wish I wish I had a pet elephant!"—as does the use of exclamation marks. There are some serious errors in conventions and sentence structure but they are not intrusive.

ESSAY:

One day I was walking through the school yard and I found this neat looking rock. Magical spots on this rock were moving around and spelling out words it read you may wish for any

ESSAY CONTINUED:

thing you would like with this rock but remember you only get one wish. I heild the stone tightly I wish I said I wish I wish I had a pet elephant! I heard foot steps that sounded like giants be hind me. I slowly turned around and saw a humun- gous! gigantic! enormous! elephant stamping through the grass! It picked me up by its trunk and started charging straight tourd the school! I closed my eyes and imagined this wasn't happening but believe me that did not work. when I opened my eyes We were standing

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GRADE THREE SAMPLE ESSAY: SCORE OF 3

CRITERIA:

Presents some relevant ideas fairly clearly and gives some support; shows some sense of organization; has generally correct sentence structure; uses language adequately; may contain some serious errors in grammar and conventions.

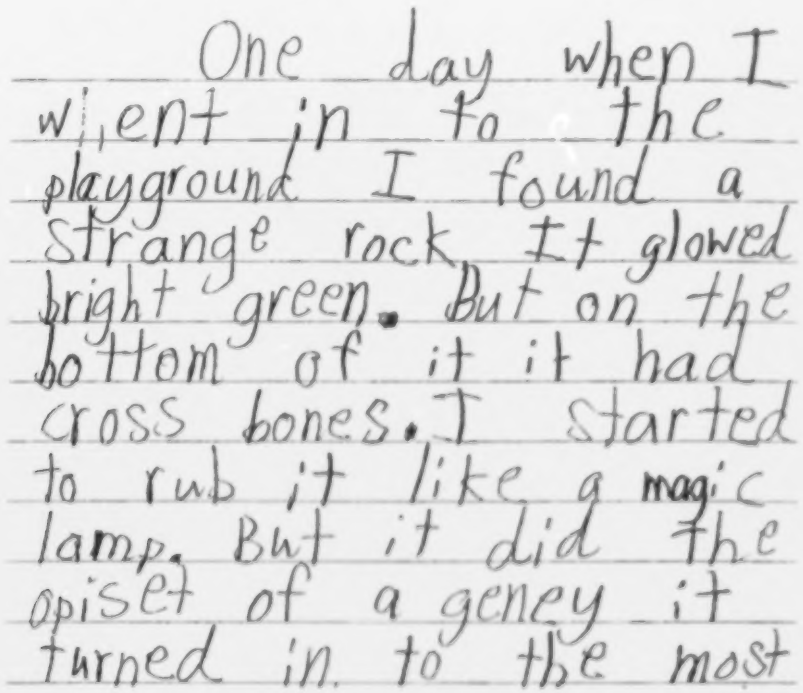
ESSAY:

One day when I whent in to the playground I found a strange rock It glowed bright green. But on the bottom of it it had cross bones. I started to rub it like a magic lamp. But it did the opiset of a geney it turned in to the most horible thing on earth a giant monster all the kids started to scream and pute on eachother. It said "The only way to distroy me is from within". Then I realized I had to shoot him in the haret So that is what I did. Then when I finished him off I said that I never want to here the word food agen

ANALYSIS:

This paper is an example of student writing at the "3" level. It presents a relevant idea in response to the prompt and there is a sense of organization to the development of the idea. Some support is given, but there are not enough details about the rock turning to a monster to result in a well-developed story. The writer uses language well enough to get the idea across to the reader, and there are serious errors in sentence structure and conventions.

ESSAY: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playground I found a
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bright green. But on the
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cross bones. I started
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ESSAY CONTINUED:

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GRADE THREE SAMPLE ESSAY: SCORE OF 2

CRITERIA:

Gives some relevant ideas, but they are unclear or barely developed; shows little sense of organization; lacks sentence control; uses language poorly; probably contains serious errors in grammar and conventions.

ESSAY:

One day I went too school. And we went to a scool yard for a picknick I finded a speshal rock I'll trund into a Kite and The rock exespod and it poped like a bom a Then it was a Kite and I flyed it. And I fly it so so so hi That it was up in The sky. And I'll trun it into a lot's of Thing I'll sale it for 70.0000 buck's. but if no one bie's it I'll Put it down for 100 dollars mabey I give it away to my baby brother when he's bigger about 10 year's old heLL be happy The end?

ANALYSIS:

This paper is an example of student writing at the "2" level. The paper begins with a relevant idea of what happens when the rock changes—"I'll trund into a Kite" — but that idea is barely developed. Instead, the essay digresses from what happens when the rock changes to what may happen to the rock—it may be sold or given away. The paper loses its focus and it becomes unclear what the writer would give away. There is a consistent lack of sentence control and serious errors in spelling and conventions.

ESSAY:

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ESSAY CONTINUED:

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GRADE THREE SAMPLE ESSAY: SCORE OF 1

CRITERIA:

Probably contains serious and persistent errors; is incoherent or underdeveloped.

ESSAY:

One day I Found a Strange rock. and I sead at it. I toak it. and I tord it in 50000 Dends. I found a naturstrahge rock. and I toak it and makd it in a anafar 100000 Dends My sister said. Wantare you Sead at I siad how nate at aod My sisTer Siad ok it w ristine to go and I aedut it gedtgedg. The and.

ANALYSIS:

This paper is an example of student writing at the "1" level. The first sentence makes it clear that the paper is about finding a strange rock, but what follows is practically incoherent. Serious and persistent errors in spelling and conventions make it very difficult for the reader to understand what the writer is trying to communicate.

ESSAY:

One day I found a Strange rock. and I Sead at it. I took it. and I tond it in 50000 Dends. I found a natarstrahge rocks and I toak it and makd it in a anatar 100000 Dends My SisTer Saido Wantare you Sead at I Siad how nate at aod My SisTer Sicd o k it w ristine to go and I aedut it gedtgedg. The and.

GRADE SEVEN SAMPLE ESSAY: SCORE OF 6

CRITERIA:

Presents thoughtful ideas and develops them logically, fully, and clearly; is very well-organized from beginning to end; has a strong command of sentence structure; uses language effectively; has few intrusive errors in grammar and conventions (spelling, punctuation, and capitalization). A "6" essay may be distinguished by features such as making insightful observations, using rich details, or creating an effective scene or mood.

ESSAY:

A special day or event that I've shared with someone would be when I went to the beach with my friend Josie. We went there to have a good time. What we came back with will never be forgotten.

My best friend Josie and I were going with our parents to the beach. It was the middle of the summer in 1997 and the temprature outside was scorching. We all new that a day at Horseneck beach would cool us down.

We arrived at the beach at around 10:30-11:30 Am. The beach was relatively crowded. We found a clearing and put down our towels and other stuff. Once we were all settled Josie and I droped our clothes and ran vigorusily into the cold water. It was cool and refreshing as we dove into a huge wave. Once we had enough we got out and ate lunch. After lunch we lay on our towels to get some sun. While we were lying there talking we heard a sharp whistle. Since there is usually always someone too far out or something like that we thought nothing of it. Suddenly every whistle for what seemed like 100 miles down the beach went off. We sat up in amazement to see all of the lifegaurds waving people to get out of the water. We both studd up wondering what on earth was going on. Teems of people started to storm out of the water. No one new what was going on.

After a short time of wondering what was happening, all of the lifegaurds ran into the water. They ran in as groups of 10 to different parts of the water. They formed a circle counted to three and then dove under. Our parents told us that they must have lost someone. By then there were many police officers standing at the waters edge. Some distance away we heard sirens creeping closer. They sounded like a whole army. Everyone was in a frenzy.

All of the lifegaurds along the beach preformed the same circle procedure for the next 10-15 min. If there indeed was someone out there he was probarly already dead. Right in front of us there was this police officer who was average height and skinny. Josie pointed to him and I quickly turned to see what he was doing. The young police officer was running into the water at top speed. We didn't now what he was after, just that he had all of his clothes on! He dove under and up poped two heads, His and the other mans. They brought him out of the water and to our surprise dumped him next to our towel. Of course we had to move. A few minutes later an ambulance showed up and we had to move farther away. It was a scary "Drama in real life," situation. The man was in his late 20's and by this time his skin was a purpleish color. The lifegaurds preformed CPR along with the paramedics. This went on for about 20 min, Josie and I had front row seets for a real rescue. This was not like the stuff you see on Baywatch, it was real. The CPR was not working so they put the man into the ambulance and drove away. As for us, well we packed up our stuff and went home.

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The next day we read about it in the papers. The man had died. A heartattack might have also helped out on the drowning. That was the first in 50 years anyone has died at Horseneck beach. I will never forget that experience ever. But I do often wonder what would have happened if none of that happened. Our purpose of going to the beach was to have fun and relax. What we came back with is a memory never to be forgotten.

ANALYSIS:

This paper is an example of student writing at the "6" level. The writer fully and clearly explains the special day with rich, interesting details. The logical, chronological organization is appropriate for the subject matter. The writer's reflections on the day—a scary "Drama in real life" and "Our purpose of going to the beach was to have fun and relax. What we came back with is a memory never to be forgotten"—provide depth to the writing and the language effectively helps set the scene. There are few errors in grammar and conventions. Sentence structure is correct and varied. The statement of the main point of the story in the introduction—"We went there to have a good time. What we came back with will never be forgotten"—as well as in the conclusion further highlights the successful construction of a consistently focused essay.

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ESSAY CONTINUED:

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The next day we read about it in the papers. The man had died. A heartattack might have also helped out on the drowning. That was the first in 50 years anyone has died at Horseneck beach. I will never forget that experience ever. But I do often wonder what would have happened if none of that happened. Our purpose of going to the beach was to have fun and relax. What we came back with is a memory never to be forgotten.

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GRADE SEVEN SAMPLE ESSAY: SCORE OF 5

CRITERIA:

Presents good ideas and develops them logically, fully, and clearly; is very well-organized throughout; has a generally strong command of sentence structure; uses language well; has relatively few intrusive errors in grammar and conventions.

ESSAY:

A special day that I shared with someone was when I visited my grandparents during a hard time of life.

My grandpa was very sick from cancer and the doctor said that he wouldn't live long. At first, I didn't want to believe this. I just couldn't picture my intellegent, energetic grandpa dead! My grandma was the same way and always told everyone, "Your grandpa has lived through many operations and that kind of stuff, and he's not about to give up now." I tried to believe this, but I knew that it just wasn't true.

My grandpa had problems doing things like eating and talking, it was really hard to see him that way. I was so used to seeing his bright happy face, and now it was blank, and shallow.

While my mom and uncle took care of my grandma's bills and finding a new apartment for her, my brother and I got to spend time with my grandpa. We talked to him and spent time holding his hand and sitting silently. Everyone was crying and upset.

Even though grandpa could only mumble, when my mom, step-dad, brother and I were leaving and saying "good-bye," I could hear grandpa faintly saying good-bye too.

At the time, I didn't think that it was so special to see my grandpa so sick, it just made me cry. My thoughts on this changed the next day though, and I knew that it was very important that I had seen grandpa that day.

The next morning, my mom told me, before I went to summer camp, that my grandpa had died the night before. I was very grateful that I had seen him before his death, but I still wish that he was around to share good and bad times with the rest of the family, and the people that had loved him.

ANALYSIS:

This paper is an example of student writing at the "5" level. It presents an appropriate response to the prompt and fully and clearly communicates the importance of the day. The paper is well organized around the significance of the day rather than the chronological events of the day: "We talked to him and spent time holding his hand and sitting silently." The writer's use of language is effective: "I was so used to seeing his bright happy face, and now it was blank, and shallow." The sentences are correct and there is some dialogue. There are few intrusive errors in conventions.

ESSAY:

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ESSAY CONTINUED:

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GRADE SEVEN SAMPLE ESSAY: SCORE OF 4

CRITERIA:

Presents relevant ideas and develops them clearly and fairly well; is generally well-organized throughout; has generally well-formed sentences; uses language fairly well; has relatively few serious, intrusive errors in grammar and conventions.

ESSAY:

The Wedding

I remember the day as if it were yesterday. It was a rainy January 17, 1996. Even though the weather was bad it was a happy day for everyone. It was the day of my oldest sister's, Jenny, wedding. It was a happy, but busy, day for everyone. In the morning all the women, including me, we're at the salon getting our hair done.

After we finished with our hair we went to the Club, where the ceremony and reception were going to be held, to decorate. We decorated everything with baloons and streamers. We set up the tables and put decorations on each one. After the decorations were done we all went home to finish getting ready.

After we were ready the whole immediate family net at my grandmother's house. We were all there, Jenny, Mom, Dad, me, my cousin, my aunt, my uncle, and my grandmother.

After a little while the limosine came to pick Jenny up to drive her to the wedding. My cousin, Lesley, and I went along because we were the bride's maids, and my dad went because he was the best man.

The ride in the limosine was very fun. It was the first time I had ridden in a limosine. This limosine had everything, a television, champagne, soda, a phone, snacks, everything.

We finally arrived to the Club. Jenny and my dad went in, followed by the flower girl, the ringbarer, and finally, by Lesley and I. We got into our positions and the ceremony began. All eyes were on Jenny and David, her husband-to-be.

The judge began saying the vows, and they were finally declared husband and wife. Everybody started clapping and cheering, and the reception finally began.

I caught the brides' flowers, which means, according to legend, that I was going to be the next one to get married.

Everybody was happy. We all danced the night away.

This event was important because it brought the whole family together. It brought all of us that live in Providence with our other relatives, such as my aunt and cousins that lived in New York and Massachusetts.

Also because it was the day that my sister got married. It was a day of happiness for her, which meant a day of happiness for all of us.

ANALYSIS:

This paper is an example of a seventh-grade student's writing that meets Rhode Island's writing standard. Her sister's wedding day is an appropriate choice for a special day or event and the writer has provided adequate details to recreate that day. The logical organization moves the reader easily through the paper. The writer's use of language allows the main point to be clearly understood: "I remember the day as if it were yesterday," and "This event was important because it brought the whole family together."

The sentence structures are generally correct and this paper contains relatively few serious errors in grammar and conventions.

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Also because it was the day that my sister got married. It was a day of happiness for her, which meant a day of happiness for all of us.

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GRADE SEVEN SAMPLE ESSAY: SCORE OF 3

CRITERIA:

Presents some relevant ideas fairly clearly and gives some support; shows some sense of organization; has generally correct sentence structure; uses language adequately; may contain some serious errors in grammar and conventions.

ESSAY:

The 1996 Summer Olympics was a special time for me. It took place in Atlanta, Georgia. I went with my dad. My mom didn't go because she was visiting her family in the Philippines.

When my dad and I arrived in Georgia we went camping. The camp was next to Atlanta. We were going to see the Olympic Games for a week.

The first thing we saw was a kayak race. It was at Lake Lanier. Next we saw a field hockey game at the Georgia Dome. My dad and I saw a great U.S.A. baseball game at the Atlanta-Fulton Stadium. Those were all great games but, the best game we saw was a U.S.A. basketball game. Both of us had fun at all of the games.

Going to the Olympics was important. It was important because I got to spend time with my dad. It was also important because I got to go to the Olympics. It taught me what it was like to be there. In case I ever go again. I hope I will have other special times.

ANALYSIS:

This paper is an example of student writing at the "3" level. It presents an appropriate response to the prompt and the main idea is clear. The organization is logical. There is some support for the main idea, but the lack of details results in a "list" of activities rather than a developed essay. Sentence structures are generally correct but simple. There are few serious errors in grammar and conventions.

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ESSAY:

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GRADE SEVEN SAMPLE ESSAY: SCORE OF 2

CRITERIA:

Gives some relevant ideas, but they are unclear or barely developed; shows little sense of organization; lacks sentence control; uses language poorly; probably contains serious errors in grammar and conventions.

ESSAY:

A special day that I shared with someone, was going to the mall with my cousin Tanya. This was important to me because my mom would always say no you can't go. Should would also say your to young and how are you going to get a ride there or back home. But when Tanya and I went to the malls we had a blast. We cheaked out every store. We ended up buying keychains, cd's, makeup, sunglass and we even stoped at Newport Creamery.

ANALYSIS:

This paper is an example of student writing at the "2" level. It is an appropriate response to the prompt but it is barely developed. Although the writer states "This was important to me because my mom would always say no you can't go," more details are needed to develop that point. Lack of text makes it impossible to determine whether or not the writer can sustain any organization of ideas, and there are serious errors in conventions.

ESSAY:

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GRADE SEVEN SAMPLE ESSAY: SCORE OF 1

CRITERIA:

Probably contains serious and persistent errors; is incoherent or underdeveloped.

ESSAY:

trip to Florda

it was in 1995 win we wore go to Florda. So win we workr up it was 5:19 in the morg so we win to so we stop in vange so we seelp at the hold till and we gont up. and we lift. so ther was a storn we ride on the aneo so we wiht into the storm the van was tir to go on the grass but we stop at the gas stor and ther was the storm so we ran. next we wint to Garn to vans my cans. and we lift Garh and the sint sand womk to Florda so we hand fun in Florda and at 3 pm it rains ore 2 pm it ran too the tstorm was storm storng but is was fun. so we lift so we wint home

the eand

ANALYSIS:

This paper is an example of student writing at the "1" level. A trip to Florida is the focus of the story, but this paper is so difficult to read that the story gets lost. Persistent and serious errors in conventions make it difficult to understand what the writer is trying to communicate.

ESSAY:

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it was in 1995 win we wore go
to Florda. So win we workr up
it was 5:19 in the morg so we wint
So we stop in vange so we seelp at
the hold till and we gont up. and we
lift. so ther was a storn we ride
on the aneo so we wiht into the
storm the van was tir to go on the
grass but we stop at the gas stor
and ther was the storm so we
ran. next we wint to Garn to
vans my cans. and we lift Garh
and the sint sand womk to Florda
So we hand fun in Florda. and at
3 PM it rains ore 2pm it ran too the
tstorm was storm storng but is
was fun. So we lift so we wint home
the eand

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GRADE TEN SAMPLE ESSAY: SCORE OF 6

CRITERIA:

Presents thoughtful ideas and develops them logically, fully, and clearly; is very well-organized from beginning to end; has a strong command of sentence structure; uses language effectively; has few intrusive errors in grammar and conventions (spelling, punctuation, and capitalization). A "6" essay may be distinguished by features such as making insightful observations, using rich details, or creating an effective scene or mood.

ESSAY:

Dear Administrative Team,

I agree with the plan for a new dress code. Students often feel pressured to keep up with the latest styles and trends. If everyone would dress the same, this stress would be eliminated. Fitting in is already a formidable task for some students, and this new dress code would alleviate at least one of their worries.

Poor students, just like everyone else, also feel this need for acceptance. When uniforms are worn, no one is able to discern between the wealthy and those who are less fortunate. In this way, a sense of equality would be established as a result of this new dress code.

When given a free choice over wardrobe selection, some teenagers may take this means of expression to a dangerous extreme. For example, some girls select skimpy tops and scanty skirts as their normal attire. Obviously, any mode of dress which improperly or distastefully exposes certain parts of the body is considered by many to be inappropriate attire for school.

Another cause for conflict may occur when students sport clothes displaying offensive language or controversial issues. This may cause unnecessary fights to erupt. Clothing which promotes alcohol or drugs is also unacceptable because it opposes the school's substance abuse policy. If everyone would dress alike, a more pleasant and less disruptive learning environment would be achieved for both the pupil and the teacher.

Also, this plan would eliminate the major financial burden on parents to buy new clothes for the advent of each school year. Arguments between parents and their children over selecting clothes would also be an issue of the past. By getting rid of this trivial problem, the new dress code will allow for more important discussions to take place amongst family members.

Some students might argue that the new dress code would take away their means of expression. Students must realize that there are other available outlets for expression, such as music, dance, and athletics, just to name a few. Also, this dress code would not control the types of accessories worn by pupils. Therefore, they would still have some freedom. Teenagers must not think of the dress code as imposing upon their individual lives and liberties. They must realize that this new policy will serve to benefit everyone attending the school.

Sincerely,
A Concerned Dress Code
Supporter

ANALYSIS:

This paper is an example of student writing at the "6" level. The writer offers thoughtful insights on the effects of certain clothing—"Clothing which promotes alcohol or drugs is also unacceptable because it opposes the school's substance abuse policy"—as well as possible results of wearing uniforms—"Students must realize that there are other available outlets for expression, such as music, dance, and athletics, just to name a few." Ideas are organized logically from beginning to end and there are strong details in support of the main idea. Sentence structure is correct and varied. Rich vocabulary—"alleviate, discern," etc—. adds to the effective use of language. The paper exhibits strong control of grammar and conventions.

ESSAY:

Dear Administrative Team,

I agree with the plan for a new dress code. Students often feel pressured to keep up with the latest styles and trends. If everyone would dress the same, this stress would be eliminated. Fitting in is already a formidable task for some students, and this new dress code would alleviate at least one of their worries.

Poor students, just like everyone else, also feel this need for acceptance. When uniforms are worn, no one is able to discern between the wealthy and those who are less fortunate. In this way, a sense of equality would be established as a result of this new dress code.

When given a free choice over wardrobe selection, some teenagers may take this means of expression to a dangerous extreme. For example, some girls select skimpy tops and scanty skirts as their normal attire. Obviously, any mode of dress which improperly or distastefully exposes certain parts of the body is considered by many to be inappropriate attire for school.

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ESSAY CONTINUED:

Another cause for conflict may occur when students sport clothes displaying offensive language or controversial issues. This may cause unnecessary fights to erupt. Clothing which promotes alcohol or drugs is also unacceptable because it opposes the school's substance abuse policy. If everyone would dress suitable, a more pleasant and less disruptive learning environment would be achieved for both the pupil and the teacher. Also, this plan would eliminate the major financial burden on parents to buy new clothes for the advent of each school year. Arguments between parents and their children over selecting clothes would also be an issue of the past. By getting rid of this trivial problem, the new dress code will allow for more important discussions to take place amongst family members.

Some students might argue that the new dress code would take away their means of expression. Students must realize that there are other available outlets for expression, such as music, dance, and athletics, just to name a few. Also, this dress code would not control

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ESSAY CONTINUED:

the types of accessories worn by pupils. Therefore, they would still have some freedom. Teenagers must not think of the dress code as imposing upon their individual lives and liberties. They must realize that this new policy will serve to benefit everyone attending the school.

Sincerely,
A Concerned Dress Code Supporter

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GRADE TEN SAMPLE ESSAY: SCORE OF 5

CRITERIA:

Presents good ideas and develops them logically, fully, and clearly; is very well-organized throughout; has a generally strong command of sentence structure; uses language well; has relatively few intrusive errors in grammar and conventions.

ESSAY:

Dear Administrative Team,

I believe your proposal to have a dress code that includes a school uniform is a step in the wrong direction Introducing a school uniform suppresses the student's ability to express himself, the costs of the uniforms would be very high, and the students would be very much against it. For these reasons, I implore you to reconsider your plan.

First of all, a uniform will suppress the students' expression of his individuality. Through history, clothing has developed from just plain cloth to very colorful and decorative articles of distinction. In todays world, many things can be told about a person by their clothing. Things such as what kind of music you listen to, your political beliefs, and whether or not you have a sense of fashion or style. These things can be inferred by print on the clothing itself or the way the clothing is worn. Everyone has their own personality and everyone has his own way to dress to present their personality to the rest of the world. There is no better way to do so than to cover yourself in it.

Secondly, these uniforms will cost a lot of money. Buying two or three uniforms for each of the two thousand students in this school can certainly add up. There are better ways to employ that money, such as, new computers, improving the student parking facilities, or new books even. Paying for thousands of uniforms is not the wisest way to spend what little money the school system has.

Last of all, the students would be very much against it. If your plan is instated, it would not be too long before the student body would rise together and, through any means possible, stop the dress code. No one would rather wear a uniform than their own clothes. Especially teenagers who take offense at everything that is said to them.

In conclusion, uniforms should not be part of the dress code for this high school. Uniforms suppress an individual's ability to express his unique qualities, cost a great deal for the school system, and the students would oppose. That is why uniforms should not be introduced to my school.

ANALYSIS:

This paper is an example of student writing at the "5" level. It presents good ideas in response to the prompt (i.e., uniforms will suppress the students' expression, will cost a lot of money, and will be opposed by students). These ideas are developed through relevant support: "There are better ways to employ that money." The organization is logical and consistent throughout, and the use of language is effective. Sentence structure is varied and there are few errors in grammar and conventions.

ESSAY:

Dear Administrative Team,

I believe your proposal to have a dress code that includes a school uniform as a step in the wrong direction. Introducing a school uniform suppresses the student's ability to express himself, the costs of the uniforms would be very high, and the students would be very much against it. For these reasons, I implore you to reconsider your plan.

First of all, a uniform will suppress the student's expression of his individuality. Through history, clothing has developed from just plain cloth to very colorful and decorative articles of distinction. In today's world, many things can be told about a person by their clothing. Things such as what kind of music you listen to, your political beliefs, and whether or not you have a sense of fashion or style. These things can be inferred by print on the clothing itself or the way the clothing is worn. Everyone has their own personality and everyone has his own way to dress to present their personality to the rest of the world. There is no better way to do so than to cover yourself in it.

Secondly, these uniforms will cost a lot of money. Buying two or three uniforms for each of the two thousand students in this school can certainly add up. There are better ways to employ that money, such as, new computers, improving the student parking facilities,

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ESSAY CONTINUED:

or new books even. Paying for thousands of uniforms is not the wisest way to spend what little money the school system has.

Last of all, the students would be very much against it. If your plan is instated, it would not be too long before the student body would rise together and, through any means possible, stop the dress code. No one would rather wear a uniform than their own clothes. Especially teenagers who take offense at everything that is said to them.

In conclusion, uniforms should not be part of the dress code for this high school. Uniforms suppress an individual's ability to express his unique qualities, cost a great deal for the school system, and the students would oppose. That is why uniforms should not be introduced to my school.

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GRADE TEN SAMPLE ESSAY: SCORE OF 4

CRITERIA:

Presents relevant ideas and develops them clearly and fairly well; is generally well-organized throughout; has generally well-formed sentences; uses language fairly well; has relatively few serious, intrusive errors in grammar and conventions.

ESSAY:

Dear Administrator,

In a recent article from the times, I read about a proposed dress code, forcing students to wear uniforms. Perhaps you should listen to the opinion of a student on this matter – though I am only one of many, I feel that I speak for a large percentage of the student body when I say that the dress code is a bad idea.

While it has been proven that a uniform dress code has increased efficiency in some schools, it is also a potential violation of the first amendment–right to freedom of expression The high school prides itself on it's diversity, but with the addition of a dress code one of the most basic factors that sets people apart will be gone.

There are also certain factors that could make a dress code counter productive. Take, for example, long pants – a standard item in a uniform. Though this is fine in winter and autumn, during the spring it can be very uncomfortable. As major testing also occurs during spring, the result will be that the students, unable to concentrate on work because of discomfort, could do poorly on exams.

Finally, purchasing uniforms has the potential to be costly. Though this problem has been solved in the past by buying cheap uncomfortable clothing. As I mentioned before, discomfort is a counterproductive agent.

For the good of the students, vote against this proposal. It can only end badly.

ANALYSIS:

This paper meets Rhode Island's writing standard at grade 10. It presents relevant ideas in response to the prompt and provides support for those ideas (e.g., "The high school prides itself on it's diversity, but with the addition of a dress code one of the most basic factors that sets people apart will be gone"). The organization is logical and straightforward: The writer presents arguments and concludes with an appeal to vote against the proposed dress code. Sentence structure is varied and the language is appropriate to the task. There are relatively few errors in grammar and conventions.

ESSAY:

Dear Administrator

In a recent article from the times, I read about a proposed dress code, forcing students to wear uniforms. Perhaps you should listen to the opinion of a student on this matter - though I am only one of many, I feel that I speak for a large percentage of the student body when I say that the dress code is a bad idea.

While it has been proven that a uniform dress code has increased efficiency in some schools, it is also a potential violation of the first amendment - right to freedom of expression. The high school prides itself on it's diversity, but with the addition of a dress code one of the most basic factors that sets people apart will be gone.

There are also certain factors that could make a dress code counter productive. Take for example, long pants - a standard item in a uniform. Though this is fine in winter and autumn, during the spring it can be very uncomfortable. As major testing also occurs during spring, the result will be that the students, unable to concentrate on work because of discomfort, could do poorly on exams.

Finally, purchasing uniforms has the potential to be costly. Though this problem has been solved in the past by buying cheap uncomfortable clothing. As I mentioned before, discomfort is a counterproductive agent.

For the good of the students, vote against this proposal. It can only end badly.

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GRADE TEN SAMPLE ESSAY: SCORE OF 3

CRITERIA:

Presents some relevant ideas fairly clearly and gives some support; shows some sense of organization; has generally correct sentence structure; uses language adequately; may contain some serious errors in grammar and conventions.

ESSAY:

Dear Administrative Team,

I am a student here at and I totally disagree with the plans to establish a new school dress code. Everyone has the freedom to express themselves in any way they choose Clothing is one way people can express their feelings and show their personality. It's a way to be different. There should be some rules on what may or may not be suitable for school, but having everyone wear uniforms is not the answer. The school has no right to tell people that they can't wear jeans and a t-shirt and that they have to wear a school uniform. Students should be able to wear anything in school as long as it doesn't take away from another persons education. If it does the person should be told the outfit is not suitable for school, and they should be asked to change. Everyone has unique personalities and they will find some other way to express themselves if the dress code changes. no one wants to wear school uniforms, and it probably wouldn't change anything. I don't know of any students who have a problem with the way others dress, so it must be the teachers who have the problem. Our school has many other more serious issues to deal with. So why doesn't the school board focus their time and effort into the more serious things rather than making a big deal out of the schools dress code.

ANALYSIS:

This paper is an example of student writing at the "3" level. There is one developed idea about a dress code: "Students should be able to wear anything in school as long as it doesn't take away from another persons education." Consistency in focus shows there is some sense of organization and there is some variety to the generally correct sentence structure. Adequate language allows clear communication. There are some errors in conventions.

ESSAY:

Dear Administrative Team,

I am a student here at _____ and I totally disagree with the plans to establish a new school dress code. Everyone has the freedom to express themselves in any way they choose. Clothing is one way people can express their feelings and show their personality. It's a way to be different. There should be some rules on what may or may not be suitable for school, but having everyone wear uniforms is not the answer. The school has no right to tell people that they can't wear jeans and a t-shirt and that they have to wear a school uniform. Students should be able to wear anything in school as long as it doesn't take away from another persons education. If it does the person should be told the outfit is not suitable for school, and they should be asked to change. Everyone has unique personalities and they will find some other way to express themselves if the dress code changes. no one wants to wear school uniforms, and it probably wouldn't change anything. I don't know of any students who have a problem with the way others dress, so it

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ESSAY CONTINUED:

must be the teachers who have the problem. Our school has many other more serious issues to deal with. So why doesn't the school board focus their time and effort into the more serious things rather than making a big deal out of the schools dress code.

GRADE TEN SAMPLE ESSAY: SCORE OF 2

CRITERIA:

Gives some relevant ideas, but they are unclear or barely developed; shows little sense of organization; lacks sentence control; uses language poorly; probably contains serious errors in grammar and conventions.

ESSAY:

Dear Administrative Team:

I think that the New dress code is great, but not for public school. I think we should be able to ware what ever we are commfortable with to ware too school escpecialy public ones. Now if going to private schools you can give them a dress code. You should not change the code of dress at eny public school.

Thank you
Sincerely

ANALYSIS:

This paper is an example of student writing at the "2" level. It presents a relevant idea in response to the prompt—"I think that the New dress code is great, but not for public school"—but barely develops that idea. A sense of organization cannot be determined from such limited text. This paper contains serious errors in grammar and conventions.

ESSAY:

Dear Administrative Team:

I think that the New dress code is great, but not for public school. I think we should be able to ware what ever we are commfortable with to ware too school escpecialy public ones. Now if going to private schools you can give them a dress code. You should not change the code of dress at eny public school.

Thank you
Sincerely

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GRADE TEN SAMPLE ESSAY: SCORE OF 1

CRITERIA:

Probably contains serious and persistent errors; is incoherent or underdeveloped.

ESSAY:

Dear Administrative Team,

I Don't think It will be good If we have a dress code so I'm going to have to disagree with that. I think that kid would abuse that. And I think they will fight over that.

ANALYSIS:

This paper is an example of student writing at the "1" level. There is an appropriate opinion given in response to the prompt: "I Don't think It will be good If we have a dress code..." but the idea is never developed. There are serious and persistent errors in grammar and conventions.

ESSAY:

Dear Administrative Team,

I Don't Think it will be good If we have a dress code so I'm going To have To disagree with that. I Think that kid would abuse that. And I Think they will fights over that.

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APPENDIX B: 1999 SCORING TEAMS
GRADE THREE

Snider, Mary Ann – Rhode Island Department of Education, Chief Reader
Huppee, Natalie – Middletown, Assistant Chief Reader & Table Leader
Izzo, Tom – Rhode Island Department of Education
Kaplan, Susan – Rhode Island Writing Project
Desmarais, Ginny – Advanced Systems

Table Leaders
Bouclin, Marilynn – Johnston
Carron, Jean – West Warwick
Gentile Claudio, Patricia – Westerly
Friedman, Audrey – North Kingstown
Gross, Jane – Providence
Hayes, Kathleen – Warwick
Ritchie, Joanne – Chariho
Sclama, Jane – Bristol/Warren
Washington, Linda – Pawtucket

Readers
Adamec, Janice – Warwick
Adams, Kathleen – Warwick
Allsworth, Raymond – Providence
Angelone, Leslie – Warwick
August, Dawn – Barrington
Bacon, Mary – Warwick
Beam, Kathy – Cranston
Beattie, Debra – Warwick
Blais, Elaine – Scituate
Bronson, Mary Ellen – Portsmouth
Broomfield, Ann – Pawtucket
Butler, Laura – Barrington
Campbell, Isabel – Burrillville
Canfield, Barbara – South Kingstown
Carroll, Felicie – South Kingstown
Champagne, Nancy – North Kingstown
Codega, Loraine – Barrington
Condon, Hope Debbie – Cumberland
Cotoia, Shirlee – Warwick
Donahue, Deborah – Smithfield
Dupuis-Brosseau, Georgette – Smithfield
Emerson, Sue – West Warwick
Faella, Don – Barrington
Faria, Francesca – Portsmouth
Foraste, Diane M. – Barrington
Goldberg, Sarah – Lincoln
Grow, Trudy – Cumberland
Herlihy, Diane – Westerly
Hughes, Petra – Covenrtry
Iannetta, Linda – Cumberland
Jarry, Kathleen – Cumberland
Kaczmarek, Maria – Central Falls
Lachance, Diana – Coventry
Lacoste, Marlee – Block Island
LaCross, Judy – East Providence
Lebeau, Mary – West Warwick
Long, Dorla – South Kingstown
Manganelli, Judy – West Warwick
Mariotti, Sharon – Smithfield
Marshall, Kristen – Cumberland
Martinelli, Joyce – Coventry
McDermott, Cyndie – Narragansett
Mercer, Nancy – Westerly
Muccino, Claudia – Barrington
Osmanski, Jean – East Providence
Packhem, Judy – West Warwick
Petrocelli, Carolyn – Jamestown
Poland, Adrian – North Kingstown
Powell, Julie – Warwick
Quattrocchi, Rebecca – Exeter/West Greenwich
Rodehorst, Jo – Barrington
Roklan, Suzanne – Portsmouth
Sanguilano, Gino – Barrington
Seadale, Nancy – Barrington
Simonelli, Robin – Lincoln
Stahlbush, Fran – Foster
Sykes, Penel – Warwick
Tobin, Ann – Tiverton
Truver, Denise – Tiverton
Valk, Joanne – Cranston
Weaver, Kevin – Portsmouth
Westkott, Pamela – Narragansett
Worthley, Paula – Tiverton
Zaleski, Jeanne R. – Harrisville

GRADE SEVEN

Hyman, Betsey – Rhode Island Department of Education, Chief Reader
Malec, Caz – Central Falls, Assistant Chief Reader & Table Leader
Izzo, Tom – Rhode Island Department of Education
Kaplan, Susan – Rhode Island Writing Project
McCarter, Andrew – Advanced Systems
McGroary, Vince – Advanced Systems

Table Leaders
Fennessey, Mary Agnes – Foster-Glocester
Gannon, Richard – Warwick
Litterst, Helen – Rhode Island School for Deaf
Martellino, Dale – Newport
Meehen, Janice – Providence
Preble, Paula – Warwick
Ryan, Nancy – Riverside
Tarpy, Patricia – Barrington

Readers
Ahern, Marie – Pawtucket
Alix, Kim – Central Falls
Barone, Debbie – Jamestown
Bennett, Brenda – Warren
Bigelow, Cameron – Westerly
Caruso, Sally – Bristol/Warren
Chadronet, Stacey – Warwick
Connery, Mike – Coventry
Coppolino, Carolyn – North Kingstown
Corey, Jill – Scituate
DiSegna, Catherine – Cranston
Douglas, Jean – East Providence
Ferguson, Liz – South Kingstown
Finn, Rita – Portsmouth
Friedman, Audrey – North Kingstown
Frisella, Mike – Westerly
Geraghty, Nancy – Barrington
Goodman, Hannah R. – Cumberland
Hammond, Madeline – East Greenwich
Huntley, Lori – West Warwick
Isaacson, Judy – Chariho
Kinslow, Richard – Central Falls
Kite, Christopher – Providence
Klepper, Linda – Providence
Knight, Norma – West Warwick
Lalli, Jayna – Portsmouth
Leary, Timothy – Tiverton
Lemieux, Christen – Warwick
Lerner, Carol – Foster-Glocester
Limoges, Rebecca – Scituate
Lombardo, Joseph – Cumberland
Mansfield, Darren – Westerly
Martino, Deborah – Cumberland
McGreevy, Beverly – East Providence
McKiernan, Margaret – Bristol/Warren
Okwara, Maria – Rhode Island School for Deaf
Orabone, Mary Beth – Cranston
Pilkington, Deborah – Providence
Potvin, Kelly – Foster-Glocester
Rogers, Ellen – East Providence
Ruggiero-Fleser, Michell – Smithfield
Sanzen, Keith – North Kingstown
Simon, Luanne – Providence
Sorenson, Donna – Westerly
Suriani, Kathleen – Pawtucket
Tefft, Kathy – Coventry
Thiboutot, Jeannine – Tiverton
Tullson, Susan – East Providence
Ulm, Bonnie – Exeter/West Greenwich
Walsh, Robin – Smithfield
Warfel, Joanne – Block Island
Westgate-Silva, Debra – Pawtucket
Zambuco, Robert – West Warwick

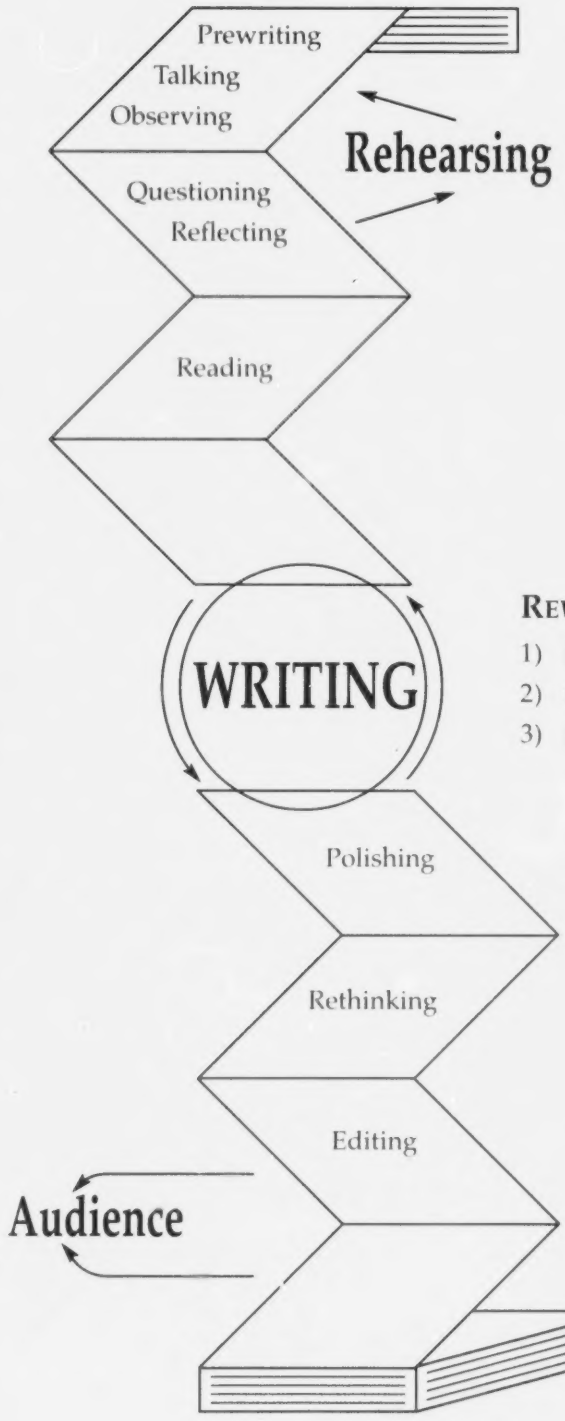
GRADE TEN

Kaplan, Susan – Rhode Island Writing Project, Chief Reader
Miner, Jeff – Warwick, Assistant Chief Reader
Hyman, Betsey – Rhode Island Department of Education
Izzo, Tom – Rhode Island Department of Education
Desmarais, Ginny – Advanced Systems
McCarter, Andrew – Advanced Systems
McGroary, Vince – Advanced Systems

Table Leaders
Alfano, Ray – East Greenwich
Arvidson, Anne – Exeter/West Greenwich
Ayotte, Joan – Pawtucket
Drapala,Liz – Pawtucket
Kelly, Patrick – Providence
Meyer, Patsi – Portsmouth
Poor, Susan – Foster-Glocester
Vacca, Mary-Jo – Warwick

Readers
Ancone, Julie – Warwick
Berube, Dolores – East Providence
Bolduc, Pauline – Warwick
Boswell, Amanda – Portsmouth
Boylan, Margaret – Warwick
Brocato, Marc – East Greenwich
Canale, Zinovia – Newport
Capobianco, Patricia – Foster-Glocester
Carpenter, Lisa – Burrillville
Celico, Andrea – Westerly
Cipolla, Christine – Davies
Cottle, Jack – Westerly
Coughlin, Karen A. – Providence
Danella, Barbara – West Warwick
Dillon, Susan – Warwick
Dubois, Kevin – Coventry
Parley, Elizabeth – Tiverton
Flaherty, Maureen – Block Island
Forrest, Peter – Tiverton
Freeman, Hollee – Providence
Gamba, Marlene – Cranston
Gardiner, Steve – Exeter/West Greenwich
Graham, Elizabeth – East Providence
Harnois, Linda – East Providence
Hoffman, Thomas – Providence
Hugulgy, James – Providence
Jackson, Patrick – Bristol
Karspeck, Wendy – West Warwick
Lancaster, Donna – Davies Career Technical Ctr.
Lombari, Donna – Providence
McCartin, Barbara – Burrillville
McClurg, Amy – Smithfield
Moscardi, Elaine – East Greenwich
Nardi, Elaina – Exeter/West Greenwich
Pesce, Connie – Providence
Peters, Kelly – Scituate
Poirier, Ronald – Pawtucket
Ramzi, Lisa – Coventry
Richards, Chris – Middletown
Robidoux, Lise – Lincoln
Rollin, Maria – Warwick
Smith, Walter E. – Providence
Stockwell, Charles – Smithfield
Stormont, Marjorie – Scituate
Talbot, Tricia – Bristol
Therriault, Jen – Warwick
Ventetuolo, Lisa – Cranston
Warner, Bethany – Smithfield
Williams, Erika – Lincoln
Zito, Cindy – North Kingstown

APPENDIX C: WRITING PROCESS DIAGRAM



PRELIMINARY STAGES:

1) discussion (with peers or teacher)
2) drawing or mapping
3) clustering or webbing
4) planning

REWRITING:

1) may happen all through process
2) may occur at one time
3) may not happen in early writing (K-2)

Editing means how something is presented (putting on the final touches).

Rhode Island Writing Assessment

School:	Test Date: March 1999
District:	
Grade: 3	Teacher:

WHAT WAS TESTED ►

This assessment measures a student's ability to communicate effectively through writing in standard English. Every student in Grade 3, 7 and 10 created a written product based on a topic appropriate for the grade level. Students had two 40-minute periods to complete their writing sample. They could receive scores from 2 to 12.

Performance Report For: JOHNATHAN DOE

RHODE ISLAND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS	YOUR CHILD'S SCORE	SCHOOL*	DISTRICT*
Achieved the Standard with Honors (Score of 11 or 12) At this level, the student demonstrates outstanding ability to communicate effectively in writing by presenting thoughtful, logical, and well-organized ideas. The student uses language effectively and demonstrates excellent control of grammar and conventions.		3%	2%
Achieved the Standard (Score of 8, 9, or 10) At this level, the student demonstrates the ability to communicate in writing by presenting logical, developed, and well-organized ideas. The student uses clear language, and the writing contains few intrusive errors in grammar and conventions.	8	28%	30%
Nearly Achieved the Standard (Score of 6 or 7) At this level, the student demonstrates the ability to communicate in writing by presenting some relevant ideas with some support. The writing shows some sense of organization and contains intrusive errors in grammar and conventions.		30%	33%
Below the Standard (Score of 4 or 5) At this level, the student demonstrates little ability to communicate in writing by presenting unclear or barely developed ideas. The writing lacks sentence control and contains serious errors in grammar and conventions.		15%	10%
Little Evidence of Achievement (Score of 2, 3, NR or OT**) At this level, the student does not demonstrate an ability to communicate in writing. The writing is underdeveloped or incoherent and contains serious and persistent errors in grammar and conventions.		24%	25%

* These columns show the percent of students at this grade who achieved each performance level.
** A score of no response (NR) is given to blank papers; a score of off topic (OT) is given to papers that have no relation to the topic or are not written in English.

APPENDIX E: SELECTED RESOURCES* ON PROCESS WRITING

Atwell, Nancie: *Coming to Know: Writing to Learn in the Intermediate Grades. Portsmouth, N.H.; Heinemann: 1989.*

Here is a book for teachers who are ready to put writing to work across the curriculum, written by teachers of grades three through six who are dissatisfied with encyclopedia-based approaches to content area writing. They asked their students instead to write as historians and mathematicians, as scientists and literary critics do—to use the process of writing to discover meaning. The many examples of student work and teacher response, clear explanations of procedure, appendices of basic resources, and practical emphasis on what writing can do to form children as learners makes *Coming to Know* a valuable tool for teachers.

Atwell, Nancie: *In the Middle: Writing, Reading and Learning with Adolescents. Boynton/Cook: 1987; Second Edition, 1998.*

The author provides a convincing model of what classroom research can accomplish. It is a story about her and her students, about what she and they learned together as collaborating writers and readers, and about what went on in one eighth-grade classroom where writing and reading instruction was transformed by a teacher who was concerned enough to question her beliefs about teaching.

Calkins, Lucy McCormick: *The Art of Teaching Writing. Portsmouth, N.H.; Heinemann: 1986.*

Although ostensibly focused on writing in the classroom, K–6, this book provides an excellent grounding in using writing as a developmental learning tool at all levels. In *The Art of Teaching Writing*, a book that is enormously probing and deeply personal, Calkins begins with the question, "What is essential in teaching writing?" and then brings those essentials to life in real classrooms. Yet this book is not simply *about* writing; it is about teaching, about working with children, and through their writing, opening their eyes to the world and making it comprehensible. Teaching writing is not just another aspect of language arts, or a different route to reading, it is the development of expression and the creation of a tool for understanding. Calkins succeeds in presenting a method for teaching writing, but her book should also be read for the insight she provides into the growth of children's minds.

Dahl, Karin L. ed.: *Teacher as Writer: Entering the Professional Conversation. National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE): 1992.*

The purpose of this book is to encourage teachers to write. Dahl notes in the Introduction that, "As teachers place themselves in the role of writers they become consumers of professional literature and creators of new information about teaching. To participate in the professional conversation is to shape its topics and focus—to change and be changed by its information and differing points of view" (p. 2). The book is divided into six sections including, "From an Author's Perspective," "Thinking Like a Writer," and "Essential Information for Teacher Writers." The chapters were all written by teachers and contain details and explanations of the process of writing.

*Synopses have been culled from the publishers' catalogues.

Fulwiler, Toby: *Teaching With Writing. Portsmouth, N.H.; Heinemann: 1989.*

A workshop approach to integrating writing into classes, this book gives an excellent introduction to writing as a way of learning.

Gordon, Naomi, ed.: *Classroom Experiences: The Writing Process in Action. Portsmouth, N.H.; Heinemann: 1984.*

Teachers, administrators, and parents will discover in this book ways to make writing a genuine learning experience for students in grades K–8. Seven experienced and successful teachers describe their explorations in evolving a process approach to writing in their classrooms and in a school system. They recount their stories in personal and direct ways so that others can easily benefit from their practices. Each teacher deals forthrightly with the problems and frustrations of changing from more traditional ways of teaching writing and reveals the pleasure that can be gained from seeing students become more independent, thoughtful writers. The authors offer helpful ideas on correcting and advising students to help them improve their writing, and on handling the increased paperload that results from an active writing program. "[This is] a marvelously practical book about putting Donald Graves' process approach to writing into action in the classroom." – Harvard Educational Review.

Graves, Donald H.: *Build a Literature Classroom. Portsmouth, N.H.; Heinemann: 1991.*

The latest volume in a series is about making reading/writing decisions in your own classroom. You learn how you and the children work together to improve learning.

Graves, Donald H.: *Discover Your Own Literacy. Portsmouth, N.H.; Heinemann: 1989.*

This book begins with a look at some teachers who combine their own explorations in literacy with their students', and then invites teachers to experiment with their own writing, reading, listening and learning.

Graves, Donald H.: *Experiment With Fiction. Portsmouth, N.H.; Heinemann: 1989.*

Fiction is a natural genre for children. Most of us do not understand it adequately. You will experiment with ten-minute fictional occasions, write with your children, and meld work in writing fiction with your reading program.

Graves, Donald H.: *Investigate Nonfiction. Portsmouth, N.H.; Heinemann: 1989.*

This book builds on what children already can do in nonfiction. You will see how the various nonfiction genres extend from children's use of oral language.

Graves, Donald H.: *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work. Portsmouth, N.H.; Heinemann: 1983.*

This book has become the basic text in the movement that established writing as a central part of literacy education and gave impetus to the whole language approach in classrooms. While many other excellent books have been published that elaborate upon or extend the field of writing education, none has had so significant an effect on the language arts curriculum. Graves' ideas have received attention from teachers, parents, administrators, publishers, and journalists, and his book has been reviewed, discussed, and dissected by educators worldwide. In effect, *Writing* has done something uncommon: It has changed education.

Hansen, Jane, Thomas Newkirk, and Donald Graves, eds.: *Breaking Ground: Teachers Relate Reading and Writing in the Elementary School. Portsmouth, N.H.; Heinemann: 1985.*

Thirteen classroom teachers and seven teacher-educators break new ground on the important subject of the relationship between reading and writing. This new ground shows how process approaches in writing can be used successfully in the teaching of reading. Teachers have known for some time that children's writing and thinking improve as the children become involved in explaining their own writing process from topic selection to finished draft. In *Breaking Ground,* twenty contributors explore the notion that approaches to reading ought to bear similar fruit.

Harste, Jerome, Virginia Woodward and Carolyn Burke: *Language Stories and Literacy Lessons. Portsmouth, N.H.; Heinemann: 1984.*

The authors reveal children as growing, effective, and sensitive users of language. Before formal schooling, they have already had much experience with language—opportunities to compare, contrast, and use it in a wide variety of settings. Children are adaptive and are aware of the contextual subtleties of language; the written and spoken evidence of children's encounters with language is the basis of the research. This evidence tells stories—language stories—from which lessons about the nature of literacy may be drawn.

Harste, Jerome, and Kathy G. Short: *Creating Classrooms for Authors: The Reading – Writing Connection. Portsmouth, N.H.; Heinemann: 1988.*

In an attempt to develop a practical theory of literacy instruction, Jerry Harste and his colleague, Kathy Short, began working with teachers in first- through sixth-grade classrooms. Their aim was to create the best literacy-learning environment possible, given what is currently known about how young children learn to read and write. *Creating Classrooms for Authors* is the result of that involvement. Written in response to teachers' requests for a practical reference guide to organizing process-centered classrooms, this volume presents a curricular frame within which teachers can plan classroom activities that help students understand what reading and writing have to do with reasoning and learning.

Langer, Judith A. and Arthur N. Applebee: *How Writing Shapes Thinking: A Study of Teaching and Learning. National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE): 1987.*

After an initial study of eighteen science and social studies teachers who used writing activities in their classrooms, the authors did an in-depth study of the ways that seven other teachers used writing in science, social studies, English and home economics classrooms. Specifically, the study shows that activities that involve writing lead to better learning than activities involving only reading and studying. Further examination of teaching methods revealed that writing activities can be developed that support content goals in a variety of subject areas. Content-area writing helps students prepare for new activities, to review learned material, and to reformulate and extend ideas and experiences.

Newkirk, Thomas and Nancie Atwell, eds.: *Understanding Writing: Ways of Observing, Learning and Teaching, Portsmouth, N.H.; Heinemann: 1988.*

Writing teachers must be observers. At the heart of the writing process instruction is the art of informed observation. The skilled teacher needs to determine what students can do, what changes they've made, what patterns of assistance they receive from other students, what themes dominate their writing. And teachers need to observe themselves—to reflect on what they see and do. *Understanding Writing* is a book about observing. It contains thirty chapters, most written by classroom teachers, that provide insights into student growth.

In the chapter "Making the Grade," Atwell discusses the use of conferences to evaluate students' writing. Atwell believes it is essential to discuss with students their accomplishments and goals and that grades should reflect students' growth in areas such as topic selection, involvement, language, effort, completeness, and editing. Through the use of example, she provides an overview of the procedures used and an explanation of an evaluation conference.

Romano, Tom: *Clearing the Way. Working With Teenage Writers. Portsmouth, N.H.; Heinemann: 1987.*

This book is written for secondary-school English teachers whose job is to help teenagers become better writers. Romano discusses the importance of respecting students' words, the use of writing to learn and discover, and writing processes in theory and practice.

Spandel, Vicki and Richard J. Stiggins: *Creating Writers: Linking Assessment and Writing Instruction. Longman: 1990.*

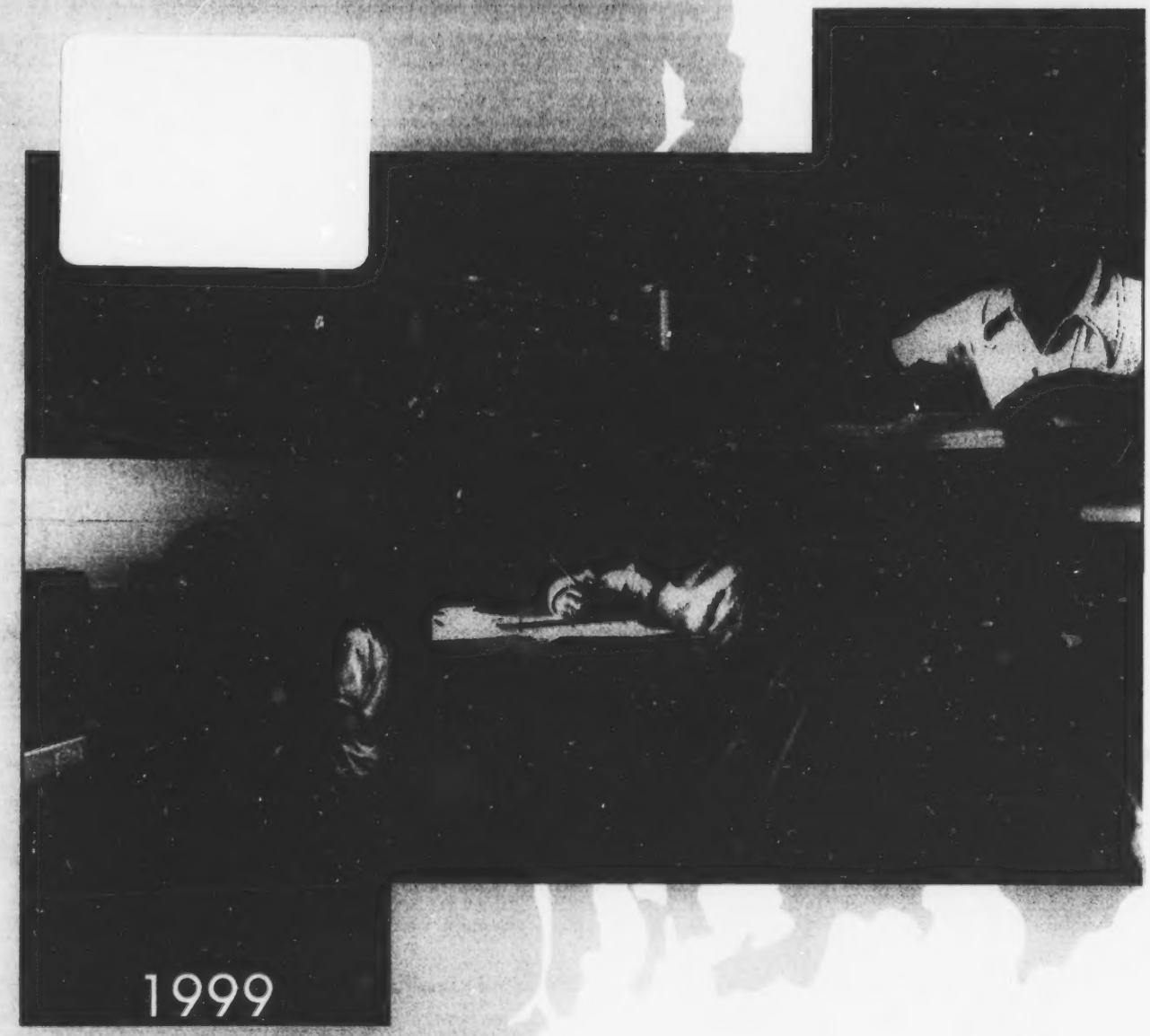
The missing link in effective writing instruction is everyday assessment techniques. These techniques, when used by teachers and students, connect assessment and writing instruction to successful teaching. The benefit is an effective, efficient, and reflective strategy for teaching writing skills. Based on seven years' collaboration in research and teaching, *Creating Writers* reveals a clear set of standards for good writing. The authors link these standards to practical strategies, encouraging good writing and evaluation. The result is highly motivated and effective writers and teachers.

The ERIC Facility has assigned this document for processing to:

In our judgment, this document is also of interest to the Clearinghouses noted to the right. Indexing should reflect their special points of view.

RHODE ISLAND

STATE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM



1999

Writing Assessment

Interpretation Guide for Families
Grades 3, 7, and 10

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND & PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Providence, R.I. 02903

Peter McWalters
Commissioner

(401) 222-2031
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Voice/TDD (401) 222-2031

June 1999

Dear Family Member:

This spring, students in grades 3, 7, and 10 took a performance assessment in writing as part of the Rhode Island State Assessment Program. An individual student score report accompanies this booklet.

This challenging test is called a performance assessment because it requires the students to demonstrate their ability to write an essay in response to a suggested topic. It is not a test with a "correct" or "incorrect" answer to be selected from a list, but rather a test of writing skills in standard English. So that you may know more about this test, three samples of the actual test, one from each grade level, are printed here. You will notice in the individual student report that a score between 2 and 12 is reported. The score is reported in this manner since each student response is scored twice. So, a student may receive a score of "3" from one reader and a score of "4" from another reader for a combined score of "7." The *Scoring Criteria* guide is also included in this booklet. Please refer to it when interpreting individual scores.

I hope that you find the information in this booklet helpful in understanding the score reported to you. If you have any additional questions, you may wish to contact your child's teacher or the school. The Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education is committed to supporting opportunities for all Rhode Island's students to demonstrate that they can achieve high standards, as represented by this assessment.

Sincerely,

Peter McWalters
Commissioner

PM (TI):mmg
Enclosures

The Board of Regents does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, sex, sexual orientation, race, religion, national origin, or disability.

Scoring the Writing Performance Assessment

The "holistic" scoring approach is used in the scoring of the writing assessment. The scoring of each student's writing, which is a response to a single prompt (topic), is guided by a set of criteria. The guide used to score writing includes scores from 1 to 6. **Please note that your child's score appears in a range of 2 to 12 since every student's essay is read and scored by two readers for a total score.**

This scoring guide for writing was developed in Rhode Island by educators throughout the state. They also developed the prompts for each grade level.

Scoring Criteria Guide: Rhode Island Writing Assessment

Score	Description
6	Presents thoughtful ideas and develops them logically, fully, and clearly; is very well-organized from beginning to end; has a strong command of sentence structure; uses language effectively; has few intrusive errors in grammar and conventions (spelling, punctuation, and capitalization). A "6" essay may be distinguished by features such as making insightful observations, using rich details, or creating an effective scene or mood.
5	Presents good ideas and develops them logically, fully, and clearly; is very well-organized throughout; has a generally strong command of sentence structure; uses language well; has relatively few intrusive errors in grammar and conventions.
4	Presents relevant ideas and develops them clearly and fairly well; is generally well-organized throughout; has generally well-formed sentences; uses language fairly well; has relatively few serious, intrusive errors in grammar and conventions.
3	Presents some relevant ideas fairly clearly and gives some support; shows some sense of organization; has generally correct sentence structure; uses language adequately; may contain some serious errors in grammar and conventions.
2	Gives some relevant ideas, but they are unclear or barely developed; shows little sense of organization; lacks sentence control; uses language poorly; probably contains serious errors in grammar and conventions.
1	Probably contains serious and persistent errors; is incoherent or underdeveloped.

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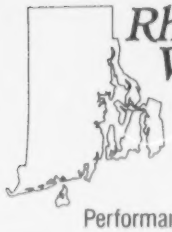
REPORTING THE SCORES

Your child's score on the writing assessment is reported to you in the Performance Report in one of five performance levels ranging from "Little Evidence of Achievement" to "Achieved the Standard with Honors." These levels represent the various levels at which Rhode Island children "performed" or scored on this test. It is important to understand the language used to describe the level at which your child performed.



Rhode Island Writing Assessment

School:	Test Date: March 1999
District:	
Grade: 3	Teacher:

WHAT WAS TESTED ▶ This assessment measures a student's ability to communicate effectively through writing in standard English. Every student in Grade 3, 7 and 10 created a written product based on a topic appropriate for the grade level. Students had two 40-minute periods to complete their writing sample. They could receive scores from 2 to 12.

Performance Report For: JOHNATHAN DOE

RHODE ISLAND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS	YOUR CHILD'S SCORE	SCHOOL*	DISTRICT*
Achieved the Standard with Honors (Score of 11 or 12) At this level, the student demonstrates outstanding ability to communicate effectively in writing by presenting thoughtful, logical, and well-organized ideas. The student uses language effectively and demonstrates excellent control of grammar and conventions.		3%	2%
Achieved the Standard (Score of 8, 9 or 10) At this level, the student demonstrates the ability to communicate in writing by presenting logical, developed, and well-organized ideas. The student uses clear language, and the writing contains few intrusive errors in grammar and conventions.	8	28%	30%
Nearly Achieved the Standard (Score of 6 or 7) At this level, the student demonstrates the ability to communicate in writing by presenting some relevant ideas with some support. The writing shows some sense of organization and contains intrusive errors in grammar and conventions.		30%	33%
Below the Standard (Score of 4 or 5) At this level, the student demonstrates little ability to communicate in writing by presenting unclear or barely developed ideas. The writing lacks sentence control and contains serious errors in grammar and conventions.		15%	10%
Little Evidence of Achievement (Score of 2, 3, NR or OT**) At this level, the student does not demonstrate an ability to communicate in writing. The writing is underdeveloped or incoherent and contains serious and persistent errors in grammar and conventions.		24%	25%

* These columns show the percent of students at this grade who achieved each performance level.
** A score of no response (NR) is given to blank papers; a score of off topic (OT) is given to papers that have no relation to the topic or are not written in English.

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STUDENT WRITING SAMPLES: SCORE OF 4

English Language Arts Standard: Creation and Presentation of Text

All students will compose clear text in a variety of forms for many purposes.

Two readers each gave this student essay a score of 4 (for a total score of 8), so it is considered an example of the scoring criteria for score 4. The Board of Regents has decided that a total score of 8 means the student has "achieved the standard" in writing.

Criteria for a Score of 4

Presents relevant ideas and develops them clearly and fairly well; is generally well-organized throughout; has generally well-formed sentences; uses language fairly well; has relatively few serious, intrusive errors in grammar and conventions.

Grade 3 Writing Example: Score of 4

Grade 3 Writing Topic (Narrative Style of Writing):

Imagine that one day you found a strange rock in the schoolyard. You could turn this rock into anyone or anything. What does it turn into? Write a story about what happens when it changes.

Grade 3 Essay:

One day I was walking through the school yard and I found this neat looking rock. Magical spots on this rock were moving around and spelling out words it read you may wish for any thing you would like with this rocks but remember you only get one wish. I held the stone tightly I wish I said I wish I wish I had a pet elephant! I heard foot steps that sounded like giants be hind me. I slowly turned

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Grade 3 Essay Continued:

around and saw a humun-
gous! gigantic! enormous!
elephant stamping through
the grass! It picked
me up by its trunk and
started charging straight
toard the school! I
closed my eyes and
imagined this wasn't
happening but believe me
that did not work.
when I opened my
eyes We were standing
right above my class one
by one they fanted and
fell like dominoes. The
elephant and I tramped
through the school
distroying every little piece
of it. I rode the
elephant home from
school but when I got
their my mom would not
let me have the
elephant. Well at least
I wouldn't have to go
to school well, not for
a while.

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STUDENT WRITING SAMPLES: SCORE OF 4

ANALYSIS:

This paper is an example of a third grader's writing that meets Rhode Island's writing standard. This appropriate response to the prompt contains relevant ideas that are developed fairly well: It is clear what happens when the rock changes. The organization of ideas allows the reader to follow the story with ease. The writer's use of language helps create emotion—"I wish I said I wish I wish I had a pet elephant!"—as does the use of exclamation marks. There are some serious errors in conventions and sentence structure but they are not intrusive.

NOTE:

Scores appear in a range of 2 to 12 since each essay is read and scored twice for a single total score.

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English Language Arts Standard: Creation and Presentation of Text

All students will compose clear text in a variety of forms for many purposes.

Two readers each gave this student essay a score of 4 (for a total score of 8), so it is considered an example of the scoring criteria for score 4. The Board of Regents has decided that a total score of 8 means the student has "achieved the standard" in writing.

Criteria for a Score of 4

Presents relevant ideas and develops them clearly and fairly well; is generally well-organized throughout; has generally well-formed sentences; uses language fairly well; has relatively few serious, intrusive errors in grammar and conventions.

Grade 7 Writing Example: Score of 4

Grade 7 Writing Topic (Informative/Expository Style of Writing):

Think about a special day or event you shared with someone. It might be a short trip or a party. Describe what you did and why it was important.

Grade 7 Essay:

The Wedding

I remember the day as if it were yesterday. It was a rainy January 17, 1996. Even though the weather was bad it was a happy day for everyone. It was the day of my oldest sister's, Jenny, wedding. It was a happy but busy day for everyone. In the morning all the women, including me, were at the salon getting our hair done.

After we finished with our hair we went to the Club, where the ceremony and reception were going to be held, to decorate. We decorated everything with balloons and streamers. We set up the tables and put decorations on each one. After the decorations were done we all went home to finish getting ready.

After we were ready the whole immediate family met at my grandmother's

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Grade 7 Essay Continued:

house. We were all there, Jenny, Mom, Dad, me my cousin, my aunt, my uncle, and my grandmother.

After a little while the limosine came to pick Jenny up to drive her to the wedding. My Cousin, Lesley, and I went along because we were the bride's maids, and my dad went because he was the best man.

The ride in the limosine was very fun. It was the first time I had ridden in a limosine. This limosine had everything, a television, Champagne, Soda a phone, snacks, everything.

We finally arrived to the club. Jenny and my dad went in, followed by the flower girl, the ringbarer, and finally, by Lesley and I. We got into our positions and the ceremony began. All eyes were on Jenny and David, her husband-to-be.

The judge began saying the vows, and they were finally declared husband and wife. Everybody started clapping and cheering, and the reception finally began.

I caught the bride's flowers, which means, according to legend, that I was going to be the next one to get married.

Everybody was happy, we all danced the night away.

This event was important because it brought the whole family together. It brought all of us that live in Providence with our other relatives, such as my

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aunt and cousins that lived in New York and Massachusetts.
Also because it was the day that my sister got married. It was a day of happiness for her, which meant a day of happiness for all of us.

ANALYSIS:

This paper is an example of a seventh-grade student's writing that meets Rhode Island's writing standard. Her sister's wedding day is an appropriate choice for a special day or event and the writer has provided adequate details to recreate that day. The logical organization moves the reader easily through the paper. The writer's use of language allows the main point to be clearly understood: "I remember the day as if it were yesterday," and "This event was important because it brought the whole family together."

The sentence structures are generally correct and this paper contains relatively few serious errors in grammar and conventions.

NOTE:

Scores appear in a range of 2 to 12 since each essay is read and scored twice for a single total score.

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STUDENT WRITING SAMPLES: SCORE OF 4

English Language Arts Standard: Creation and Presentation of Text

All students will compose clear text in a variety of forms for many purposes.

Two readers each gave this student essay a score of 4 (for a total score of 8), so it is considered an example of the scoring criteria for score 4. The Board of Regents has decided that a total score of 8 means the student has "achieved the standard" in writing.

Criteria for a Score of 4

Presents relevant ideas and develops them clearly and fairly well; is generally well-organized throughout; has generally well-formed sentences; uses language fairly well; has relatively few serious, intrusive errors in grammar and conventions.

Grade 10 Writing Example: Score of 4

Grade 10 Writing Topic (Persuasive Style of Writing):

Your school's administrative team plans to establish a new dress code. If the plan is accepted, uniforms will replace regular school attire. Students and faculty alike will be affected by this plan. Decide whether you **agree** or **disagree** with this plan. Write a letter to your school's administrative team supporting or opposing the planned dress code. Support your opinion with specific examples or reasons. Begin your letter, Dear Administrative Team.

Grade 10 Essay:

Dear Administrator

In a recent article from the times, I read about a proposed dress code, forcing students to wear uniforms. Perhaps you should listen to the opinion of a student on this matter - though I am only one of many, I feel that I speak for a large percentage of the student body, when I say that the dress code is a bad idea.

While it has been proven that a uniform dress code has increased efficiency in some schools, it is also a potential violation of the first amendment - right to freedom of expression. The high school prides itself on it's diversity, but with the addition of a dress code one of the most basic factors that sets people apart will be gone.

There are also certain factors that could make a dress code counter productive. Take, for example, long pants - a standard item in a uniform. Though this is fine

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Grade 10 Essay Continued:

in winter and summer, during the spring it can be very uncomfortable. As major testing also occurs during spring, the result will be that the students, unable to concentrate on work because of discomfort, could do poorly on exams.

Finally, purchasing uniforms has the potential to be costly. Though this problem has been solved in the past by buying cheap uncomfortable clothing. As I mentioned before, discomfort is a counterproductive agent.

For the good of the students, vote against this proposal. It can only end badly.

ANALYSIS:

This paper meets Rhode Island's writing standard at grade 10. It presents relevant ideas in response to the prompt and provides support for those ideas (e.g., "The high school prides itself on it's diversity, but with the addition of a dress code one of the most basic factors that sets people apart will be gone"). The organization is logical and straightforward: The writer presents arguments and concludes with an appeal to vote against the proposed dress code. Sentence structure is varied and the language is appropriate to the task. There are relatively few errors in grammar and conventions.

NOTE:

Scores appear in a range of 2 to 12 since each essay is read and scored twice for a single total score.

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